

*Watch Hill Fire District
Watch Hill, R. I. 02891*

DISTRICT COUNCIL MEETING

Friday, June 18, 2010

4:00 P.M.

Fire Station

222 Watch Hill Road

Watch Hill, RI

A meeting of the District Council of the Watch Hill Fire District was held at the Watch Hill Fire Station at 4:00 p.m. Friday, June 18, 2010.

The following members were present:

Edwin L. Russell, Moderator
Charles S. Whitman III, Deputy Moderator
Grant G. Simmons III, Chairman of the Park Commission
William H. White, Treasurer
Penelope B. Kelly, Member at Large
Andrew Parsons, Member at Large

Voters present:

Peter Griffin
Walter Lentz
Kenneth Parilla
Robert Peacock, Fire Department
John M. Regan III, Finance Committee
Ann Stevenson
Nelson White, Sr.

Also present were:

Chaplin B. Barnes
Harvey C. DeMovick III
Judy Kelley, Office Manager
Lyn Traver, Administrative Assistant

Excused: James T. Beale, Jr.

Proper notice having been given and a quorum being present, the Moderator, Edwin L. Russell, called the meeting to order at 4:00 P.M.

Approval of Minutes

A motion was made to approve the minutes of the District Council meeting on May 28, 2010. The motion was seconded and approved.

Financial Update and Proposed Budget - William White

Mr. White noted that the budget for 2010-2011 being presented was preliminary; there still might be some small changes before the presentation at the annual meeting.

Mr. White began by going over the current year's income and expenses. Revenue was 7% or \$58,000 over budget, mainly due to the extra payment from the Cabana owners. Expenses were 0.7% or \$6,000 over budget despite the \$81,000 unbudgeted expense for the water line repair. Mr. Russell noted that the Fire District will be claiming reimbursement for the full amount of the water line repair but that income is not included in the budget.

Mr. White stated that the Finance Committee's goal for 2010-2011 was to hold expenses and taxes flat without using any prior years' surplus and that goal was achieved. Tax income is projected at \$445,990. The Grand List is down 3 ½% even with the increase in the Ocean House's assessment. With assessments down, the tax rate went up a bit but the end result should be essentially flat. The Ocean House will contribute an extra \$20,000 due to its higher assessment. Revenue from the Bath Houses, Merry-Go-Round and Yacht Club are budgeted flat, although it is hoped they will go up if the weather is better this season. A slight increase was projected for the Cabanas. Overall, revenues are budgeted to be 3% higher than last year's budget but 3% lower than last year's actual.

Mr. White noted that expenses fall in three main categories: general, the Fire Department and the Park Commission. In total, expenses are projected to be 3% or \$26,000 less than last year's budget and 4% or \$32,000 less than last year's actual. Some lines will be higher because of the change in the handling of the Conservancy's reimbursement for expenses as well as a change in certain budget lines. For instance, Special Events used to be part of the Moderator's expenses and technology now has its own line whereas it was part of Office Administration last year.

Mr. White pointed out that the Storm Damage sinking fund now has a balance of \$60,000 so there is no need to add more to that fund. What is needed is a general reserve for new capital. Therefore, last year's Contingency fund is now the Contingency/ Capital Reserve Fund and has been increased to \$25,000. If the contingency funds are not needed during the fiscal year, they will go into a Capital Reserve account.

The Fire Department's operating expenses are up \$6,000, with \$3,000 of the increase due to moving radio purchases to operating expenses from capital expense. The capital budget is down slightly. Overall, the Fire Department budget is up approximately 1%.

Mr. White reported that there were significant reclassifications within the Park Commission budget to simplify line items. Next year's budgeted operating expenses are down 8% from the current budget and 3% from this year's actual expenses. Capital improvements are down because some of the planned lighting and fencing was done this year as part of the water line repair.

It was noted that the new fence by the cabanas is a different color than that by the Misquamicut Club, which is black. Mr. DeMovick said the Cabana Group had selected silver because it blends in when seen from a distance.

Mr. Simmons asked if there were some mechanism in the budget to address surprises. Mr. White said the first backstop would be the use of the contingency fund. The second backstop would be to reconvene the annual meeting to authorize the additional expense.

Mr. Russell noted that there were two projects that could require substantial additional expense. The first would be to repair the erosion of the sea wall between the Yacht Club and Napatree. It is expected this could cost \$150,000. Mr. Griffin asked if there were a way to treat the wall. Mr. Simmons replied that Mr. Hall has been applying a zinc compound that has been of some benefit. Mr. Nelson White wondered if a slanted wall would last longer than a straight up wall. Mr. Simmons said he had that evaluated but that there might be more damage with water coming up over the slope.

Mr. Nelson White also advised that there was shoaling along the breechway and wondered if this was narrowing the channel to the point that dredging might be necessary.

The second major project would be repair of the bathhouses behind the Merry-Go-Round. They are in disrepair. It was suggested that an upgrade of the bathhouses might generate increased usage and hence increased income.

Mr. Simmons wondered about the need to upgrade the pull boxes and their supporting wire throughout the Fire District. If the Fire Department were to change to radio power, it would cost \$50,000 for the system and \$5,000 per box. There is one radio box at the Misquamicut Club but that is operating via an agreement with the Misquamicut Fire Department. Given the expense, the Fire Department plans to remain with the existing system and will replace a mile of wire per year at \$4,000 per mile, starting this coming year. Some pull boxes can be eliminated but some are mandated.

Mr. William White said the Fire District will end the year with about \$100,000 in unrestricted cash and \$60,000 in the sinking fund and other restricted cash from the Conservancy and the Roberts Foundation.

Mr. Russell thanked the Finance Committee for all their hard work on the budget.

Underground Utility Project – Chaplin Barnes

Mr. Barnes stated that the Conservancy had wanted to get the utility poles down as soon as possible but that it would have involved construction during the summer so it will not be done until after Labor Day and the project will be finished in October.

Mr. Lentz suggested that if the poles are not coming down until the fall, the repaving should not be done until then either. It was also suggested that when the poles come down they could be used for pilings.

Cabanas – Harvey DeMovick

Mr. DeMovick said the cabanas are very close to being complete. The owners will go in tomorrow. The crew will be back next week for the final punch list. The last dumpster is to be

removed today. They are in the process of putting back the dune grass and will do some additional planting.

Mr. Griffin applauded them on a job well done.

Website – Andrew Parsons

Mr. Parsons said he had just received access to the most up to date version of the site early this morning and had emailed the link to the District Council. He asked everyone to please review the site during the next few days and advise of any changes. When the site is live its address will be: www.watchhillfiredistrict.org.

Mr. Griffin asked what had been decided in terms of putting the charter on the website. Mr. Parsons replied that the entire charter is on the site.

Mr. Whitman is looking into how the site can be used to reduce the sending out of paper.

Ocean House – Edwin Russell

Mr. Russell said that whenever a big event was scheduled, he would meet with Police Chief Mello and Ocean House President, Daniel Hostettler, to determine how best to handle potential traffic. He noted that the past community open house that relied on buses from the middle school went very well. For the events this coming weekend, they will have to block off part of Bluff Avenue, but they will keep Plimpton open for access to downtown.

The Gansett is down in the harbor. Marketing and operations for this vessel are under the control of the Ocean House. There have been a few trips already but mostly for orientation.

It was noted that there are 200 chairs and some tents on the beach now, all on Ocean House property.

East Beach – Edwin Russell

Mr. Russell commented on the current experiment to get people to take out their own garbage. He was concerned that the public had been trained to expect the East Beach Association to clean up. There was some trash left behind the Jenkins' and the Lemp's over the past few days. Mr. William White said he and his wife walk daily. There was a good deal of trash after the first good weekend but other than that it has been fairly clean. There are still trash barrels at Manatuck and Ninigret. Mrs. Kelly said she thought the beach goers would talk to each other and encourage clean up.

Mr. Russell asked for two volunteers to walk the beach to monitor the situation. Mr. William White and Mr. Simmons volunteered. If there are piles of garbage, Mr. Markham will be advised.

Moderator Activity – Edwin Russell

Mr. Russell stated that on occasion he has gotten involved in local issues without consulting the District Council first. In particular, he has been working to get speed bumps placed in Watch Hill. Mr. Russell said he had started a dialogue with Town Manager, Steven Hartford, who is

against speed bumps, last year. Chief Mello has also been involved and is more inclined to favor speed bumps.

It was suggested that there could be temporary speed bumps on Westerly Road as an experiment. Mr. Russell has written Town Council President Diana Avedesian, asking for a discussion of the issue and a vote by the Town Council. He wants to be on record that the Fire District is concerned about the issue and is looking for a solution. He hopes not to have to wait until August for action. It was noted that the cross walks have been recently painted.

Mrs. Kelly said that there is a blind corner at Everett and Westerly Roads and also at the junction of Avondale Road and Watch Hill Road. In the former case, perhaps there could be four way stop signs.

Mr. Simmons said he has asked for concrete tubs with "stop for pedestrian" signs that could be put in the roadway. He would place these on Bay Street and maybe at Westerly Road.

Mr. Whitman suggested that if Mr. Russell is invited to address this issue in front of the Town Council, the District Council authorize him to do so.

A motion was made that the Fire District proposes the use of temporary speed bumps as an experiment to control traffic. The motion was seconded and approved.

The meeting was adjourned to Executive Session at 5:20 pm.

The District Council returned to regular session at 5:30 p.m. and, there being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Judith Kelley
Office Manager